

This special threat advisory is intended to provide situational awareness of threats to public order, public safety, and the security of public officials arising from violent online rhetoric opposing new and ongoing public health restrictions (Information current as of 31 January 2022, 1345hrs). The IMCIT continues to maintain visibility on emerging threats and will provide updates as required.

SPECIAL THREAT ADVISORY – UPDATE 4

FREEDOM CONVOY 2022: ONGOING IN OTTAWA SINCE JANUARY 28/29, 2022

KEY POINTS

- Disruptions that include 2,950 personal and commercial motor vehicles continue to impact Ottawa as part of the ongoing Freedom Convoy 2022 demonstration. Numbers of individuals arriving and departing the National Capital Region remain fluid and will likely fluctuate daily as the demonstration continues.
- The duration of the event in Ottawa still remains unknown. Individuals are now physically present together in Ottawa and planning can take place in person, without the need to communicate via open sources, resulting in the potential for adverse activities with little to no warning.
- No formal organized plot of violence has been identified. Factors such as the circulation of misinformation, exhaustion, substance abuse, altercations amongst protesters and with law enforcement and the influence of ideologically motivated actors or charismatic speakers may impact the temperature of the crowd. The potential for violence by a lone actor or fringe group cannot be discounted.

CURRENT STATUS

The Freedom Convoy 2022 events continue to drive discussions online and receive widespread promotion within anti-public health order networks. Frequent news of the convoy is being reported on Canadian media outlets and social media momentum, including live footage of the convoy from various points in Canada, continues to grow. The main GoFundMe associated with the account has exceeded nine million dollars as of January 31, 2022 with donations continuing to increase.¹

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SCOPE AND SCALE

A estimated mix of 2,950 personal and commercial motor vehicles² continue to disrupt downtown Ottawa.³ Numbers of individuals arriving and departing the National Capital Region (NCR) remain fluid and will likely fluctuate daily as the demonstration continues.

As of Monday at 1345hrs, social media shows significantly less individuals in downtown Ottawa than the previous two days. Comments in a video posted January 31 by an individual known for anti-government, anti-Semitic and anti-public health order grievances indicates that “it’s going to be an interesting week.”⁴ While details related to the exact context of this comment are unknown, at the very least, it suggests the protest will continue.

INTENT WHILE IN OTTAWA

No formal organized plot of violence has been identified, however, there are a number of factors which could impact the situation as the protest continues, including the number of people in the crowd, the circulation of misinformation, exhaustion, substance abuse, potential for altercations amongst protesters and with law enforcement and the influence of ideologically motivated actors or charismatic speakers. This may impact the temperature of the crowd and the potential for violence by a lone actor or fringe group cannot be discounted. As with all large public order events, these factors may have the potential to galvanize larger portions of the protesters to violence.

Although planned activities took place over the weekend, there is limited information posted about formal activities planned for the coming week. News reports and social media narratives indicate that protesters have a desire to stay in Ottawa,⁵ however no timeframe has been identified. Since the initial formation of the convoy, it has been observed that some protesters intend to stay until public health restrictions and mandates are removed. Recent news that the Prime Minister (PM) has tested positive for COVID-19 has resulted in an increase of conversations attempting to determine his location and claiming that he is at Harrington Lake.⁶ Conversations regarding protesting where individuals think the PM is located continue to circulate social media.⁷

Impromptu protests will continue to occur with little or no social media advertising beforehand due to the ability to mobilize a large group of people on short notice. Over the weekend, multiple businesses proactively closed due to traffic interruptions and safety concerns related to the demonstration. News reports indicate disruptions to businesses continue with the closures of some remaining in place, including one school located in proximity to the demonstration.⁸

The fundraiser associated with the convoy continues to receive monetary contributions and social media and news reports indicate that the GoFundMe account has released the first batch of funds and is initiating their transfer to the organizer.^{9 10} There is no information on what will be done with the remainder of the funds or if GoFundMe has released additional funds to the organizer. Concerns over the cost of policing the protests in Ottawa has resulted in chatter online suggesting the City of Ottawa should sue to organizers to cover the costs.¹¹

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NATIONWIDE SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

Canada-wide solidarity actions have occurred simultaneously with the demonstration in Ottawa and it is likely more will be planned. As the situation in Ottawa is receiving widespread coverage, actions in Ottawa may continue to influence impromptu events in other Canadian provinces.

News reports indicate that Highway 4 near the Coutts border in Southern Alberta is currently blocked.¹² Additionally, over the weekend, several convoys and protests took place within Canadian provinces, some of which include:

- Various protests within British Columbia were held,¹³ some of which disrupted traffic.¹⁴
- A solidarity rally in Saskatchewan took place, which included dozens of trucks around the Saskatchewan Legislature building.¹⁵
- Hundreds of semi-trucks and other vehicles drove through Winnipeg and protesters gathered outside the Manitoba Legislature in solidarity.¹⁶
- In Ontario, a convoy local to Barrie was held and reportedly had hundreds of vehicles participate.¹⁷
- A solidarity demonstration in Whitehorse included a line up of vehicles 2km long.¹⁸

GENERAL THREATS

Significant open source information related to the ongoing demonstration in Ottawa continues to be posted. While online threats may continue to be identified sporadically, individuals are now physically present together in Ottawa and planning can take place in person without the need to communicate via open sources, resulting in the potential for adverse activities with little to no warning. The IMCIT assesses that opposition to vaccine mandates continues to grow in intensity and could become a potential flash point for acts of violence.¹⁹

Information from the Ottawa Police Service indicates that a police cruiser was rammed by a truck the morning of January 31. No injuries were reported as a result of this incident and Ottawa Police is managing the situation.²⁰

Overall sentiment towards law enforcement remains mixed. Negative comments related to police have been observed in relation to claims that a group of truckers is stuck on the Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway.²¹ An individual known for anti-government, anti-Semitic and anti-public health order grievances referenced these truckers in a post with the comments, “holding truckers hostage on a federal road west of downtown with no food or supplies, fuel, etc. They are going to starve them out.”²² Additional adverse comments towards law enforcement have been identified from an Instagram account believed to be associated to the individual who allegedly threw gravel at the PM during the election campaign.²³ A post from January 30 reads, “Spread Out Gentlemen. Fill In The Gaps. Divide The

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Police Line. We Need Distractions Throughout The City.”(sic)²⁴ Both the individuals who made these comments are believed to currently be in Ottawa.

News sources have reported that police resources have been deployed to Ottawa from various jurisdictions,²⁵ in addition to references that the police are stretched thin due to the ongoing demonstration²⁶ and that financial policing costs are totaling \$800,000 per day.²⁷ Narratives like this may give the protesters the perception that law enforcement is vulnerable, and may embolden them to prolong the protest to drain police resources and force pressure on the government to submit to their demands. Additionally, should a major incident unrelated to the demonstration occur in the NCR, law enforcement and emergency response may be impacted.

While chatter encouraging peaceful and lawful protest continues to circulate, concerns exist that protest events associated with the convoy could be exploited by individuals who engage in or promote actions that pose a risk to public and officer safety.^a

Ideologically motivated individuals who have promoted controversial views are present in Ottawa.^b While not all ideological in nature, various incidents which have occurred during protest activities have resulted in widespread coverage opposing the protest²⁸. Some incidents that have generated significant chatter include:

- Photos of flags with swastikas at various locations.^{29 30}
- Video and images of individuals drinking,³¹ dancing,³² and parking³³ on the War Memorial and Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. As well as an image insinuating someone urinated on the memorial.³⁴
- Confederate flags and pro-TRUMP^c flags.^{35 36}
- A sign which stating, “Mandate Freedom” along with an upsidedown Canadian flag attached to the Terry FOX statue.³⁷
- Harrassment of individuals from various mainstream media outlets.³⁸
- Actions showing the MPP from Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston removing a barricade, with the caption, “I call on the PPS to completely open Parliament Hill, or we might have to open it up for ourselves.”³⁹

^a It is important to note that there are a range of people with varying views participating in the convoy and Ottawa protest, ranging from those who have experienced hardships due to COVID-19 to those who are ideologically motivated and see the convoy as an opportunity to further their narratives to a wier audience. Not all individuals support extreme activities and there is a diversity of views regarding the use of violence.

^b The presence of ideologically motivated individuals does not necessarily mean ideologically motivated criminality or ideologically motivated violence will occur.

^c While flags of this nature always need to be taken in context, based on chatter within networks opposing the Freedom Convoy 2022, they are perceived as being symbols that are racially motivated, ethno-nationalist and supportive of “far right” views and are contributing to polarizing narratives regarding the current situation in Ottawa.

- Assault of a service user and security guard,⁴⁰ as well as the harassment of homeless individuals and staff at the Shepherds of Good Hope.⁴¹

In addition to these, Ottawa Police are investigating threatening, illegal, intimidating behaviour to police and city workers.⁴²

Narratives opposing the convoy continue to be observed, and individuals with signs opposing the protest have been visible within the crowds.⁴³ As protesters continue to occupy downtown Ottawa, social media posts expressing frustration with the incessant honking and ongoing traffic disruptions have been observed.⁴⁴ ⁴⁵ Continued disruptions of this nature may increase frustrations among the general public leading to altercations. As of today, various businesses, including restaurants, can reopen at 50% capacity.⁴⁶ It is likely that individuals associated with the convoy will cause disruptions at these venues in defiance of public health orders during the remainder of the demonstration.

The IMCIT is liaising with law enforcement partners to maintain visibility on this event and other events related to the opposition of trucker mandates which are occurring nationally, and will provide updates as required.

Issued by: Ideologically Motivated Criminal Intelligence Team (IMCIT)

Approved by: Director, Directorate of Strategic Intelligence, Federal Policing National Intelligence

¹ <https://www.gofundme.com/f/taking-back-our-freedom-convoy-2022>

² RCMP Sit Rep #39: Freedom Convoy 2022- National Capital Region 2022-01-28-2022-01-31

³ <https://www.ottawapolice.ca/Modules/News/index.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZZfdkLBJ2c/>

⁵ <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/convoy-organizers-plan-to-stay-in-ottawa-after-weekend-protests-spark-anger>

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/votecanada/posts/935478017328733>

⁷ <https://twitter.com/topproducer59/status/1488216199855054850>

⁸ <https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/here-s-what-s-closed-in-ottawa-due-to-the-trucker-protest-1.5760504>

⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/100286905896085/videos/1056706708206210>

¹⁰ <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/gofundme-releasing-1-million-of-fundraising-money-to-trucker-convoy-1.5757502>

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/leMatour27/status/1488213641480441857>

¹² <https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/protestors-block-alberta-highway-near-coutts-border-rcmp-tells-drivers-to-stay-away>

¹³ <https://www.vancouverislandfreedaily.com/news/local-truck-convoy-draw-crowds-across-b-c/>

¹⁴ <https://vancouverisland.ctvnews.ca/hundreds-flock-to-b-c-legislature-in-support-of-trucker-convoy-1.5760131>

¹⁵ <https://globalnews.ca/news/8580321/covid-19-trucker-convoy-saskatchewan-scott-moe/>

¹⁶ <https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/local-convoy-drives-through-winnipeg-but-not-all-truckers-are-on-board-1.5760225>

¹⁷ <https://barrie360.com/barrie-convoy-freedom-rally/>

¹⁸ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/protestors-congregate-in-whitehorse-in-support-of-ottawa-convoy-1.6333009>

¹⁹ IMCIT NTL #2021-07 -- 2021-12-23

²⁰ RCMP PIU 2022-74888_UPDATE #43_Canada Unity Freedom Convoy 2022_2022-01-31

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztpPufR7EAA>

²² <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZX-o8ouN5l/>

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- ²³ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/shane-marshall-people-s-party-gravel-trudeau-1.6172690>
- ²⁴ https://www.instagram.com/p/CZX3_n7O09N/
- ²⁵ <https://globalnews.ca/news/8579041/toronto-police-resources-ottawa-trucker-convoy/>
- ²⁶ <https://ottawa.citynews.ca/local-news/continued-police-presence-in-downtown-ottawa-for-second-day-of-demonstrations-5008498>
- ²⁷ <https://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/news-and-community/weekend-demonstration-information-and-updates.aspx#Update-January-30--728-pm>
- ²⁸ https://www.reddit.com/r/ottawa/comments/sg9myo/convoy_megathread_22/huupnt6/
- ²⁹ <https://twitter.com/yonifreedhoff/status/148751797342223374?s=21>
- ³⁰ https://twitter.com/justin_ling/status/1487667177461321728?s=21
- ³¹ https://twitter.com/s_thornton_332/status/1487518296668721153?s=21
- ³² <https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/top-canadian-defence-officials-condemn-protesters-dancing-on-tomb-of-the-unknown-soldier-1.5760168>
- ³³ <https://twitter.com/amyourPAL/status/1487923229817815040>
- ³⁴ <https://twitter.com/davidcommon/status/1487777554979332104>
- ³⁵ https://twitter.com/gray_mackenzie/status/1487450201132613638?s=21
- ³⁶ <https://twitter.com/PtboJames81/status/1487775570717028352>
- ³⁷ <https://twitter.com/kwhateverman/status/1487480802774589452?s=21>
- ³⁸ <https://twitter.com/EatsFood2/status/1487842222146039809>
- ³⁹ <https://twitter.com/randyhillier/status/1487515969182441474?s=21>
- ⁴⁰ <https://twitter.com/sghottawa/status/1487854425368633344>
- ⁴¹ <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/convoy-protesters-make-for-a-really-tough-day-at-shepherds-of-good-hope-shelter-ceo>
- ⁴² <https://twitter.com/OttawaPolice/status/1487823600409366530>
- ⁴³ <https://twitter.com/CanadianCentury/status/1487825429566263297>
- ⁴⁴ <https://twitter.com/aliciac16/status/1488193859284779015>
- ⁴⁵ <https://twitter.com/Bbheadd/status/1488191940252377093>
- ⁴⁶ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-covid-19-reopening-jan-31-1.6333424>